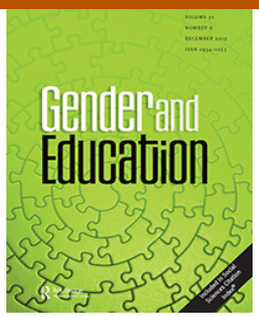

Gender and Education

ISSN: 0954-0253 (Print) 1360-0516 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cgee20

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To cite this article: Mieke Van Houtte, Roselien Vervaet, Roslyn Arlin Mickelson & Peter A.J. Stevens (2019) The ethnic prejudice of Flemish pupils: the roles of school gender composition and laddish culture, Gender and Education, 31:8, 1057-1076, DOI: 10.1080/09540253.2018.1440283

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1440283

GENDER AND EDUCATION
2019, VOL. 31, NO. 8, 1057–1076
https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1440283

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The ethnic prejudice of Flemish pupils: the roles of school gender composition and laddish culture

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ABSTRACT

This study examines whether secondary schools' gender composition and levels of laddish attitudes influence the degree of ethnic prejudice among Flemish pupils. We hypothesize that in addition to pupil-level predictors of prejudice, the school's gender composition and its laddish culture play roles in pupils' attitudes toward ethnic minorities. We use multilevel analysis with data obtained in 2014–2015 from 2250 Flemish pupils in 48 secondary schools in Flanders. Both girls' and boys' ethnic prejudice is related to their laddish attitudes. Boys' levels of ethnic prejudice are associated with the gender composition and the laddish culture of their school, while girls' ethnic prejudice is more likely to be influenced by the laddish culture of the school when the proportion of male pupils in the school increases. The findings suggest that in order to reduce ethnic prejudice it might be fruitful to focus on macro-level factors, such as tackling laddish cultures at school.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 10 March 2017
Accepted 14 December 2017

KEYWORDS
Sociology; difference and diversity; migration; surveys; quantitative methods and statistics; secondary education; youth culture

Introduction

Since the Second World War, Flanders (the Dutch speaking region of Belgium) has developed into a multiethnic society. Labour migration, the demise of the Soviet Union, the rise of the EU, migrant family reunification, and chain migration processes (Sierens et al. 2006; Vanduynslager et al. 2013), turned schools in Flanders notably ethnically diverse, particularly in urban areas (Desmedt and Nicaise 2006). This demographic change has coincided with an increasing interest among scholars in the outgroup attitudes of ethnic majority pupils, including their degree of ethnic prejudice.

Research on this topic tends to focus on the targets (typically ethnic minority pupils) and the undesirable consequences of ethnic prejudice for them with regard to their motivation, mental health, achievement, and self-esteem (Sierens et al. 2006; Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff 2003), but generally ignores the determinants of ethnic prejudice among majority pupils. The few studies that pay attention to the variability of ethnic prejudice among pupils tend to restrict their attention to individual-level characteristics, such as gender, socioeconomic status (SES), age, and level of education (Coenders, Lubbers, and

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Scheepers 2004; Vervoort, Scholte, and Scheepers 2008). To date, research about the influence of school contexts, teachers, and the importance of underlying organizational structures has been notably scarce. Nonetheless, these factors are important because educators and policy makers can manipulate school features more readily than they can change pupils' characteristics (Marcoulides, Heck, and Papanastasiou 2005; Mickelson 2014; Mickelson, Bottia, and Lambert 2013).

Several school characteristics have been identified as important for predicting variations in levels of ethnic prejudice among pupils. The SES and ethnic composition of the pupil body have been the focus of much of the published literature. Prior research from the US, South Africa, Israel, Australia, and many Western European societies indicates that ethnic majority pupils who attend schools with socioeconomically and ethnically diverse pupil bodies are less likely to be prejudiced against ethnic minorities (Pettigrew and Tropp 2011; Tropp and Prenovost 2008; Vervaet, Van Houtte, and Stevens 2018).

In this study we investigate two additional potentially important yet relatively unexplored school characteristics likely to affect pupils' levels of ethnic prejudice: The gender composition of the school and the extent to which the school has a laddish culture. A school's various cultures confer status and shape normative behaviour inside and outside the classroom. These are important contexts for adolescents' social interactions, achievement and other educational outcomes (Harris 2011; Jackson 2006; Milner 2004; Tyson 2011). Prior research on gender composition's impact on pupils has focused on its relationship to pupils' socio-emotional well-being, achievement attitudes and related behaviours, or to pupil misbehaviour (Datnow and Hubbard 2002; Demanet et al. 2013; Van Houtte 2004; Younger and Warrington 2006). However, a school's gender composition is also likely to contribute to pupils' ethnic prejudice because females are less likely to express ethnic prejudice than males (Coenders and Scheepers 1998; Vervaet, Van Houtte, and Stevens 2018; Vervoort, Scholte, and Scheepers 2008). When girls gain ascendancy – numerically speaking – at school, it is plausible that their attitudes will become dominant at school and may influence those of boys as well (cf. Wilson (1959) with respect to socio-economic status). Therefore, we hypothesize that in schools with a greater proportion of female pupils, all pupils are likely to display lower levels of ethnic prejudice.

At the same time, in schools with a higher proportion of boys, we might expect the general culture to be more anti-academic or 'laddish'. The term 'lad' originally referred to a group of white, working-class boys who rejected educational values (Willis 1977). Later, it became applicable to middle-class boys as well (Francis 1999). In a 'laddish' culture, the image prevails that valuing studying is associated with a feminine role set (Jackson 2002). As a consequence, boys would be ridiculed if peers observed them working hard at school. Consequently, they feel pressured to conform to these macho images by undervaluing studying in order to remain popular (Jackson 2003; Warrington, Younger, and Williams 2000). Prior research on laddish culture suggests the phenomenon goes beyond anti-intellectualism. Laddish culture has been linked to ethnic prejudice, macho values, and misbehaviours designed to undermine the formal educational and socialization goals of the educational system (Francis 1999; Harvey 2011; Jackson 2006; Willis 1977). In line with these findings, a laddish school culture is likely to increase majority group members' ethnic prejudice.

Much of the existing research about school-level contributions to ethnic prejudice focuses on the American context. Findings from that extensive corpus of research, in conjunction with the growth of multiethnic pupil populations across Western Europe, support our rationale for conducting research on these dynamics in Flanders, where ethnic minorities experience prejudice and discrimination in education. Because negative outgroup attitudes are harmful for ethnic minorities (Elchardus and Siongers 2009) and Flemish schools are becoming increasingly diverse, this study aims to explore individual and school-level factors that account for the variability in levels of prejudice among Flemish natives toward ethnic minorities. Specifically, we contribute to existing literatures on the topic by examining the possible influence of a school's gender composition and its overall laddish culture on the ethnic prejudice of Flemish secondary school pupils. After a peak in middle childhood, children's ethnic attitudes display a slight decrease in prejudice until late childhood (8–9 years), while no general developmental tendency is found for adolescence (10 years and older) (Verkuyten and Thijs 2013). This relative stability of ethnic attitudes during adolescence, in conjunction with the fact that secondary schools launch adolescents onto their adult status attainment trajectories, suggests that this period of formal education is a theoretically interesting one for examining the association between school level characteristics and a variety of critical outcomes, including pupils' ethnic prejudice.

Background

Ethnic prejudice

Current levels of ethnic diversity in Flemish schools are the outcome of broader historical, economic, and political forces associated with globalization, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and their geopolitical consequences. In Flanders today, the largest ethnic minority groups share a Muslim identity, a religious background that is often stigmatized, stereotyped, and not particularly welcomed by a large proportion of the Flemish population. Flemish teachers often have negative attitudes about, in particular, Islam and Muslims, a diverse population whose many ethnic differences are overshadowed by their shared religious identity (Agirdag, Loobuyck, and Van Houtte 2012; Juchtmans and Nicaise 2013). For a complex set of reasons, many ethnic minority pupils lag academically behind their Flemish counterparts (Agirdag, Loobuyck, and Van Houtte 2012), complicating the ethnic majority's perceptions of the relationship between immigration, ethnic minority status, and education.

The social conditions for ethnocentrism and ethnic prejudice can exist in stratified ethnically diverse societies like Flanders. Ethnic prejudice and ethnocentrism both refer to certain ideas and attitudes regarding ethnic outgroups (Elchardus and Siongers 2009). Sumner (1906) describes ethnocentrism as a concept with a dual structure, including an overly negative attitude toward an outgroup together with an exaggerated positive attitude about the ingroup. Research confirms the harmful consequences, including school outcomes, of negative attitudes toward outgroup for its members (Sierens et al. 2006; Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff 2003). Accordingly, the negative component of ethnocentrism is considered the most problematic (Billiet and De Witte 1995; Elchardus and Siongers 2009). However, while ethnic prejudice exists among members of the majority population

in Flanders, no strong relationship has been observed between a positive ingroup attitude and a negative outgroup attitude (Elchardus and Siongers 2009). Therefore, in the current study, we use the term 'ethnic prejudice' referring only to a negative attitude to ethnic outgroups, in line with the dominant trend in research into ethnic prejudice (De Witte 1999). Nevertheless, we expect Flemish pupils to express varying levels of ethnic prejudice toward ethnic minorities.

School gender composition

There is ample research that the gender context of schools is an important influence on the attitudes, behaviour, and academic performance of the pupils who attend them (DiPrete and Buchmann 2013; Kimmel 2010; Mickelson 2003; Van Houtte 2004). However, the research record about the effects of coeducational or single sex schools is contradictory and inconclusive (Lee and Bryk 1986; Riordan 1990). Still, Van Houtte (2004) reported that because of the gender-specific nature of study cultures, the greater presence of females in a school positively influences the school's overall study culture, which in turn, has a beneficial influence on males' achievement. Other research showed that pupils are less likely to misbehave in schools that have proportionally more female pupils and concluded that the numerically dominant group at school appeared to affect all students' study attitudes at school (Demanet et al. 2013). In her conception of group socialization theory, Harris (1995) proposes that attitudes and behaviour held by the majority of the peer group spread to the rest of the group. Yet, at the same time boys are often found to dominate the classroom and monopolize the teachers' time (Warrington and Younger 2000). Since the 1970s, it has been demonstrated repeatedly that in a coeducational setting teachers interact more often with the boys, giving them more attention in general, both positive and negative (e.g. Consuegra, Engels, and Willegems 2016; Francis 2000; Warrington, Younger, and Williams 2000).

Nevertheless, because adolescent females tend to be less ethnically prejudiced than their male counterparts (Coenders and Scheepers 1998; Vervaet, Van Houtte, and Stevens 2018; Vervoort, Scholte, and Scheepers 2008), schools whose pupil bodies have larger proportions of women can be expected to be more likely to lean toward ethnic inclusiveness or anti-racist norms. This stronger ethnic prejudice in men, might be related to the fact that they also show to be more authoritarian (Fiske 2000) and score higher on the social dominance orientation scale (Levy, Rosenthal, and Herrera-Alcazar 2010), two personality traits that are related to prejudice. Authoritarians view outgroups as threatening and inferior, resulting in ethnic prejudice (De Witte 1999; Fiske 2000). People high in social dominance orientation wish their ingroup to dominate and be superior to outgroups. They tend to hold negative attitudes toward a variety of groups that pursue social equality, such as ethnic minorities (Whitley 1999). Such claims of superiority, or a kind of 'ingroup' favouritism, seem to be an important part of certain masculinity performances, and are usually directed against women and men deviating from what is defined as 'acceptable' masculinity (Sherriff 2007). This can be easily understood, since masculinity is a relational construct, which only exists in contrast to femininity: Being 'insufficiently' masculine equals being 'too feminine' (Connell 1995; Jackson and Dempster 2009; Phipps 2016). This subordination of others as part of hegemonic masculinity – that is a high status, dominant form of masculinity – stretches to racial and ethnic minorities too

(Connell 1995). As Connell (1995, 80) puts it: 'In a white-supremacist context, black masculinities play symbolic roles for white gender construction'.

Thus, we expect that females will be less ethnically prejudiced than males, and that, consequently, Flemish youth attending schools with higher proportions of females in the pupil body will exhibit lower levels of ethnic prejudice, net of other predictors – and vice versa.

Laddism and laddish pupil culture

In Willis's classic ethnography, *Learning to Labour* (1977) readers are introduced to the lads: White working class male secondary pupils whose anti-academic culture represents their resistance to capitalist labour force reproduction through formal schooling, a system labelling them as failures. Willis (1977) describes the lads' counter-school culture as imbued with anti-academic, sexist, and racist attitudes and riddled with misbehaviours that include smoking, drinking, fighting, challenging school authority, devaluing mental labour, eschewing studying, and sabotaging teaching and learning in their classrooms. In school environments, especially in secondary education, an 'uncool to work' discourse is central to laddish constructions of masculinity (Jackson and Dempster 2009; Phipps 2016). As academic hard work is perceived as feminine, it needs to be avoided to remain popular (Jackson 2002, 2003; Warrington, Younger, and Williams 2000). As masculinity is established in opposition to femininity (Connell 1995), rejecting school can be seen as a way of rejecting femininity, and a signifier of masculinity (Lyng 2009). Willis (1977) showed how this repudiation of what is considered as feminine behaviour at school goes hand in hand with enacting a sense of superiority, not only towards girls by overt sexism, but also towards ethnic minority groups by overt racism. Since Willis (1977), a number of studies have confirmed that pupils' anti-school attitudes are related to racism or ethnic prejudice (Connolly 1994; Goodey 1997; Tillner and 2000). Therefore, we expect that to the extent that anti-school or laddish attitudes are held by pupils, the strength of the laddish attitudes will relate to their ethnic prejudice: The stronger the laddish attitudes, the higher the respondent's levels of ethnic prejudice.

While young women are more likely to conform to their family and school's behavioural norms than are adolescent males (DiPrete and Buchmann 2013; Mickelson 1989, 2003), laddish anti-academic attitudes and accompanying misbehaviours in and out of school are not confined to contemporary adolescent males. In fact, several scholars have introduced the term 'ladettes' to describe young women whose attitudes and behaviours challenge and undermine formal school and/or gender norms (Francis 1999; Jackson 2006; Jackson and Tinkler 2007). Of course, this school rejection by girls can hardly be understood as rejecting femininity and performing masculinity. Girls' school rejection is more likely to be seen as a self-worth protection strategy in response to a school system based on competitive and hierarchical sorting of individuals (Jackson 2002, 2006; Lyng 2009). As scholars have described them, contemporary ladettes' attitudes and misbehaviours are resonant of Willis' lads as well as historical accounts of 'troublesome' behaviours among young women (Jackson and Tinkler 2007). Nonetheless, we expect that Flemish males' will have stronger laddish attitudes than their female peers.

A given school can be characterized by several competing peer cultures representing different dimensions of pupils' realities at the school, including the track in which they

study or their peer group's location in the school's status hierarchy (Coleman 1961; Milner 2004). Prior research in Flanders (e.g. Van Houtte 2004; Van Houtte and Stevens 2010; Vervaet, Van Houtte, and Stevens 2018) has shown that apart from and in relationship to individual pupil factors and school organizational features, secondary schools' culture can contribute to a host of academic and non-academic outcomes. Depending upon a school's curricular track and demographic composition, one dimension of Flemish secondary schools may be a laddish culture of varying strengths and distributions among pupils enrolled in the school. Thus, in addition to examining potential effects of individual pupils' laddish attitudes on their ethnic prejudice, we also investigate whether an overall laddish pupil culture operates as an additional school-level factor in shaping ethnic majority pupils' levels of ethnic prejudice. Specifically, we expect that Flemish youth attending schools with a more laddish pupil culture will exhibit higher levels of prejudice. More laddish cultures can be expected in schools with a numerical majority of boys, spreading to all pupils, boys and girls alike (cf. supra). Moreover, boys seem to attach more importance to their public image and how they are seen by the group, while girls consider interpersonal, intimate relationships more important (Davies 1984; Francis 1999; Warrington, Younger, and Williams 2000). Because boys' sensitivity to their image makes them more susceptible to peer pressure (Vantieghem and Van Houtte 2015) and to the prevailing culture (Van Houtte 2004), we expect the school's laddish pupil culture to have a stronger influence on boys' levels of ethnic prejudice than it has on girls' levels.

In sum, we hypothesize that pupils' ethnic prejudice is associated with the gender composition of the school and that this relation might be explained by the more laddish culture in schools with a higher proportion of boys. We expect a more laddish culture to be associated with higher levels of ethnic prejudice. Moreover, we expect this impact to be stronger for boys than for girls.

School ethnic composition, tracking and pupils' individual characteristics

Previous research shows that the ethnic composition of a school is related to pupils' ethnic prejudice, given that a higher proportion of ethnic minority pupils in school is associated with reduced negative outgroup attitudes among ethnic majority pupils (Pettigrew and Tropp 2011; Vervaet, Van Houtte, and Stevens 2018). Decades of research about Contact Theory support Allport's theory (1954), suggesting that more intergroup contact is related to reduced ethnic prejudice. Zajonc's (1968) mere exposure hypothesis suggests that repeated exposure of majority members to ethnic minorities results in greater familiarity, which fosters more positive attitudes toward outgroup members. The mere presence of outgroup members (Tropp and Prenovost 2008; Zebrowitz, White, and Wieneke 2008), or simply a higher concentration of ethnic minorities in a social environment (Kalin 1996), can reduce ethnic prejudice among majority group members.

Flemish secondary pupils are tracked into general (academic), arts, technical, and vocational curricular tracks. Pupils in vocational tracks appear to be more ethnically prejudiced than pupils from more academic education (Elchardus and Siongers 2009; Vervaet, Van Houtte, and Stevens 2018). However, based on Allport's' Contact Theory (1954), we would expect that pupils in vocational track are less prejudiced, since ethnic minorities are overrepresented in vocational track. But because most of four Contact Theory's prior conditions are violated in Flemish vocational education, the Realistic Group Conflict

Theory (Campbell 1965), which relates prejudice to competition between groups over scarce resources, seems more appropriate to explain the stronger prevalence of ethnic prejudice in these lower status tracks in Flanders (Van Praag et al. 2015). It is also true that individuals with a lower educational level feel more threatened by ethnic minorities because both groups tend to compete for the same jobs (Quillian 1995; Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002).

Prior research suggests there are several individual-level characteristics related to pupils' ethnic prejudice. People with higher incomes and levels of education (Coenders and Scheepers 1998), and those who are friends with people from outgroup backgrounds are less prejudice toward ethnic minorities (Coenders, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2004; Vervaet, Van Houtte, and Stevens 2018; Vervoort, Scholte, and Scheepers 2008).

Methods

Data and sample

This study used data taken from the Racism and Discrimination in Secondary Schools survey (RaDiSS 2) collected during the 2014–2015 school year. Pupils in their final year of secondary school (Grade 6) were asked to complete a written questionnaire in the presence of a researcher and one or more teachers. In order for the data to be linked to other information, such as academic performance provided by the schools, the pupil questionnaires were not anonymous. However, all the pupils were assured that their names would be removed once the database was complete and that teachers or school staff would not be allowed access to the completed questionnaires, making the final database confidential.

We used a multistage sampling frame in order to ensure sufficient variability among cases in terms of the level of urbanization of the school environment and pupils' ethnicity. First, we selected four large, multi-cultural Flemish districts for sampling (Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt, and Sint-Niklaas). Second, we divided all the secondary schools in these areas into three locational categories: City centre, suburban area, or rural area. The aim was to select two thirds of the schools from urban areas and one third from suburban and rural areas. Within these districts, we then selected one third of schools with a low proportion of ethnic minority pupils (less than 15%), one third with a medium proportion (between 15% and 49.9%), and one third with a high proportion (between 50% and 100%) (Flemish Educational Department 2011). In total, we contacted 55 schools, out of which 49 were willing to participate, a response rate of 89%. This high response rate is due to the fact that this was a follow-up research, so actually we re-contacted schools that participated already in research two years before. Of those in the sample, 29 schools were located in a city centre, 13 in a suburban area, and 7 in a rural location. Fifteen schools had a low proportion of ethnic minorities, 17 a medium proportion, and 17 a high proportion. As a result, the participating schools cover the entire range of ethnic minority composition from 0% to 95% (see Table 1). In total, 3367 out of a possible 4107 pupils completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 82%. There was no selection bias in the sample because the only reasons pupils did not participate were absence due to illness or because their class was on a field trip. Because this study investigates predictors of ethnic majority pupils' prejudice against ethnic minority youth, only Flemish respondents

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables: frequencies (%), means (*M*), standard deviations (SD), and minimum and maximum values ($N = 2250$).

	%	*M*	SD	Min.	Max.
School level					
Ethnic minority composition		0.19	0.19	0.00	0.95
Gender composition		0.50	0.23	0.00	0.92
Laddish pupil culture		1.85	0.15	1	2
Pupil level					
Gender					
Male	49.7				
Female	50.3				
Socioeconomic status		55.06	15.95	16	90
Track					
Academic	44.7				
Technical	31.7				
Vocational	23.6				
Ethnic minority friends					
None	11.7				
A few	73.3				
Half	9.1				
Most/all	5.8				
Laddish academic attitudes		1.85	0.55	1	5
Ethnic prejudice		2.84	0.69	1	5

were included in the final analytic sample of 2250 pupils (66.8% of the 3367 who completed the questionnaires).

Variables

Dependent variable

Ethnic prejudice refers to a negative attitude toward outgroups (De Witte 1999; Quillian 1995). Because the majority of the ethnic minorities in Flanders come from Morocco, Turkey, and Eastern Europe (e.g. Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Kosovo), negative attitudes toward these three groups were measured separately and then totalled across all groups to assess the overall level of ethnic prejudice among each Flemish pupil. Pupils responded to eighteen items assessing their attitudes toward an ethnic group using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from *absolutely disagree* (=1) to *completely agree* (=5). Two examples of the items are: 'Moroccans/Turks/Eastern Europeans do not contribute to the welfare of Belgium' and 'Moroccans/Turks/Eastern Europeans are commonly unreliable' (De Witte 1999). Missing values were imputed by item correlation substitution: A missing value for one item was replaced by the value of the item correlating most closely to it (Huisman 2000). The scale was created by taking the mean scores for the 18 items, resulting in possible scores ranged from 1 to 5, with a higher value indicating greater ethnic prejudice. Cronbach's alpha for the ethnic prejudice scale is 0.89 ($n = 2250$; $M = 2.84$; $SD = 0.69$) (See Table 1).

Independent variables

Schools' *gender composition* is a metric variable based on the proportion of females enrolled in the school. We obtained the percentage of females in each school by dividing the absolute number of female respondents in a school by the total number of respondents. The proportion of females in the schools ranged from 0% to 92%. The mean gender composition was 0.50 ($SD = 0.23$).

While *laddish pupil culture* has several dimensions, our operationalization of it starts from individual's anti-academic attitudes, since in secondary education anti-schoolishness is at the core of laddism (Jackson and Dempster 2009; Phipps 2016). The survey assessed respondents' attitudes toward academic achievement, a theoretically foundational aspect of laddish culture. These respondents' individual laddish academic attitudes (see description below) were aggregated to the school level. To accomplish this, we employed a common practice for aggregating individual attitudes to the school level. First, we used the index of 'mean rater reliability' (Glick 1985; Shrout and Fleiss 1979), to ascertain whether anti-academic attitudes are shared by the pupils attending the same school. This index is based on the intra-class correlation (ICC) obtained by a one-way analysis of variance, which measures the degree of resemblance between micro units belonging to the same macro unit (Snijders and Bosker 1999). The ICC is calculated by the formula (Between mean square-within mean square)/between mean square. If the obtained value is greater than 0.60, we can state that laddish, anti-academic attitudes are shared by pupils from the same school, and that it is therefore legitimate to speak of a laddish pupil culture at the school level (see also Van Houtte 2004). We found an ICC of 0.72 ($F = 3.526$, $p < .001$), indicating that anti-academic attitudes are shared by pupils from the same school. We then calculated for each school the mean value of the attitude among individuals attending the same school (Hofstede et al. 1990; Van Houtte 2004). For the entire sample, laddish pupil culture has a mean of 1.85 ($SD = 0.15$. See Table 1). While the mean gives us an indication of the nature of the culture – more or less laddish – the standard deviation tells us how much agreement there is among the pupils in a particular school. The smaller the standard deviation, the more consensus there is among the pupils, and the stronger the culture is. A larger standard deviation indicates less coherence or more fragmentation. In this sample, we find a correlation of $r = .432$ ($p < .01$) between the degree of laddishness (mean) and the fragmentation (standard deviation), meaning that the more laddish a culture is, the less coherent or less strong it is.

The sample is almost equally divided regarding *gender* (female = 1), with 49.7% female respondents (Table 1).

The measure of *laddish attitudes* is based on respondents' self-assessment of nine attitudes toward academic achievement, that illustrate devaluing of public displays of academic achievement, like: 'It's okay to get good results, as long as you don't work hard for it' and 'I would not voluntarily answer a question in class because other pupils would then think I'm smart.' Possible scores on each item ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with a higher value indicating stronger levels of laddish attitudes. The scale was created by taking the mean scores on the nine items, resulting in possible scores from 1 to 5, with a higher value indicating stronger laddish attitudes. Cronbach's alpha for the laddism academic attitude scale is 0.82 ($n = 2250$; $M = 1.85$; $SD = 0.55$, Table 1).

Pupils identified the occupations of their fathers and mothers, which served as indicators of their SES. The parents' occupations were coded using the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and Treiman 1992), an index derived from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88). The highest ISEI score of both parents was selected as the indicator of the pupil's SES. The higher the ISEI score, the higher the SES. The lowest SES score is 16 and the highest is 90, with a mean score of 55.06 ($SD = 15.95$, Table 1).

Table 2. Bivariate (Pearson) correlations between dependent and pupil-level independent variables ($N = 2250$).

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Male	1	0.036	0.050*	0.04	0.089**	0.105**
2. Socioeconomic status		1	−0.453**	−0.142**	−0.104**	−0.017
3. Track[a]			1	0.225**	0.226**	0.01
4. Intergroup friendships				1	−0.161**	−0.026
5. Ethnic prejudice					1	0.177**
6. Laddish academic attitudes						1

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.
[a]We employed an ordinal measure of track placement (Vocational = 3; Technical = 2; Academic = 1) in order to obtain correlations among track placement and the other variables in this table.

Table 3. Bivariate (Pearson) correlations between school-level independent variables.

	1	2	3
1. Gender composition	1	−0.049*	−0.415***
2. Ethnic school composition		1	−0.120**
3. Laddish pupil culture			1

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Pupils were asked to indicate the educational track in which they were enrolled. The possible responses were academic, arts, technical, and vocational education. Pupils in arts education were excluded due to their small numbers. We assigned ordinal codes to tracks consistent with their perceived rigour in order to permit descriptive statistical analyses (Tables 2 and 3). We also created two dummy track variables, 'Technical track' (31.7% of the sample) and 'Vocational track' (23.6%). The Academic track (44.7%) served as the reference category for both of the track dummy variables (Table 1).

Pupils were asked how many of their friends were ethnic minorities: *None* (= 1), *a few* (= 2), *half* (= 3), *most* (= 4), and *all* (= 5). We created three dummy variables from the answers 'a few non-native friends' (73.3%), the answer 'half' (9.1%), and the answer 'most or all' (5.8%), with 'no ethnic minority friends' (11.7%) as the reference category (Table 1).

Ethnic minority composition at the school level is based on the proportion of total enrolled respondents who have an ethnic minority background. The ethnicity of the pupils was assessed primarily based upon the birthplace of the pupil's maternal grandmother. As is common practice, and in line with the official Flemish definition of non-native groups, pupils were considered to be ethnic minorities if their maternal grandmother, their mother, or the pupils themselves had a birthplace other than Western European (Timmerman, Vanderwaeren, and Crul 2003). If these data were not available, mother's birthplace was used. In the event that this information was also missing, the country of birth of the pupil was used. The average proportion of ethnic minority pupils in the sample of schools is 0.19 ($SD = 0.19$, Table 1).

Analytic procedures

To examine the possible influence of a school's gender composition and laddish pupil culture on Flemish pupils' propensity to hold prejudiced attitudes toward ethnic minorities, we started by analyzing the bivariate correlations at the school and the pupil level, followed by stepwise multilevel regression analyses. Our two-level multilevel

approach is appropriate given that we are dealing with a clustered sample of pupils nested within schools (MLwiN, 2.32, 2015). All metric variables were grand mean centred. In a first step we tested the association between schools' gender composition and pupils' ethnic prejudice, controlling for the school's ethnic composition, pupil's track level, and various sociodemographic characteristics that in prior research have been shown to predict an individual's level of ethnic prejudice**.** In the second model we added the school's laddish culture controlled for the pupil's laddish attitudes to ascertain the association between laddish culture and ethnic prejudice, and to examine whether laddish culture explains an eventual association between gender composition and ethnic prejudice. In the third model we added a cross-level interaction between gender and laddish culture to test whether laddish culture influences boys and girls differentially. Following this reasoning, in a last model we added an interaction between gender composition and laddish culture. If laddish culture has a different impact on boys and girls, then it might also be the case that its impact differs according to the gender composition of the school, with a stronger impact in schools with higher proportions of boys.

Results

The zero-order correlations among ethnic prejudice and pupil-level characteristics are in the expected direction, showing that males ($r = .089$; $p < .01$), those in nonacademic tracks ($r = .226$; $p < .01$), and pupils with stronger laddish/anti-academic attitudes ($r = .177$; $p < .01$) have higher levels of prejudice. Flemish youth from a higher SES ($r = -.104$; $p < .01$) and those with more intergroup friendships ($r = -.161$; $p < .01$) express lower levels of ethnic prejudice.

As anticipated, there is a significant, negative correlation ($r = -.415$; $p < .05$) between school gender composition and its laddish pupil culture: The more girls enrolled in a school the less laddish is its pupil culture.

The null model revealed that 20.47% ($p < .001$) of the variance in ethnic prejudice is situated between schools. The first model in the multilevel analysis showed that, as expected, a greater proportion female pupils in a school is negatively associated with ethnic prejudice (Table 4, Model 1). However, this association appeared as only borderline significant. When taking into account laddish culture and laddish attitudes in the second model, the impact of gender composition turns non-significant, whereas laddish pupil culture in itself is not significantly associated with ethnic prejudice. Having laddish attitudes showed a significant, positive association with ethnic prejudice: Pupils displaying more laddish attitudes are also likely to manifest more ethnic prejudice (Table 4, Model 2).

The cross-level interaction between gender and laddish culture added in the third model confirmed the expectation that laddish culture has more impact on boys than it has on girls. Even more, given the non-significance of the main effect of laddish culture, we can say that while laddish culture is not significantly associated with girls' ethnic prejudice, it does influence boys' levels of ethnic prejudice significantly. The interaction at the school level between gender composition and laddish culture appeared non-significant. Next to the significant, positive association between laddish attitudes and ethnic prejudice, and the significant interaction between gender and laddish culture, the final model revealed a significant negative effect of ethnic school composition – the more ethnic minorities at school, the less ethnic prejudice found among Flemish pupils.

Table 4. Results of multilevel analyses of school gender composition, laddish culture and ethnic prejudice ($N = 2250$).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	2.814***	2.819***	2.806***	2.791***
	(0.060)	(0.059)	(0.058)	(0.059)
School level				
Gender composition	−0.275°	−0.194	−0.172	−0.173
	(0.142)	(0.151)	(0.146)	(0.146)
Ethnic composition	−0.377*	−0.372*	−0.341*	−0.315*
	(0.150)	(0.146)	(0.143)	(0.144)
Laddish culture		0.122	−0.354	−0.380
		(0.215)	(0.238)	(0.238)
Gender composition*				−1.103
Laddish culture				(0.712)
Pupil level				
Gender (ref. girl)	0.074*	0.058*	0.068*	0.066*
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Gender *			0.863***	0.768***
Laddish culture			(0.202)	(0.211)
SES	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Track (ref. academic)				
Technical	0.263***	0.283***	0.279***	0.270***
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)
Vocational	0.512***	0.499***	0.487***	0.473***
	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.052)
Ethnic minority friends (ref. none)				
A few	−0.230***	−0.224***	−0.229***	−0.228***
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)
Half	−0.462***	−0.461***	−0.469***	−0.467***
	(0.061)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.060)
Most/all	−0.474***	−0.464***	−0.471***	−0.467***
	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.070)	(0.070)
Laddish attitudes		0.177***	0.177***	0.178***
		(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Variance components				
Intercept u0	0.380 (0.011)	0.372 (0.011)	0.369 (0.011)	0.369 (0.011)

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Furthermore, we found a significant positive effect of gender – boys are more prejudiced than girls – of being enrolled in a technical or vocational track versus an academic track, and significantly lower levels of prejudice among pupils with a few, half or most friends from an ethnic minority compared to those with no friends with an ethnic minority background (Table 4, Model 4).

To unravel the cross-level interaction and grasp the differences between girls and boys, we conducted separate analyses by gender (Table 5). The analysis for boys revealed a significant, negative association between gender composition and boys' ethnic prejudice, which held when controlling for laddish culture and laddish attitudes. Boys display lower levels of ethnic prejudice in schools with more girls enrolled. The analysis confirmed a (borderline) significant and positive association between laddish culture and boys' ethnic prejudice. As for girls, no significant association was found between gender composition nor laddish culture and ethnic prejudice. However, the interaction between gender composition and laddish culture proved to be significant, indicating a lower impact of laddish culture the greater the proportion of girls in a school. Stated otherwise, the more boys there are in school, the stronger the influence of laddish culture is for girls.

Table 5. School gender composition, laddish culture and ethnic prejudice for boys and girls.

	Boys ($N = 1131$)	Girls ($N = 1119$)
Intercept	2.983***	2.760***
	(0.083)	(0.064)
School level		
Gender composition	−0.412*	0.191
	(0.168)	(0.208)
Ethnic composition	−0.387*	−0.343*
	(0.175)	(0.167)
Laddish culture	0.479°	−0.191
	(0.253)	(0.251)
Gender composition*	0.095	−2.187*
Laddish culture	(0.864)	(0.980)
Pupil level		
SES	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Track (ref. academic)		
Technical	0.228***	0.288***
	(0.069)	(0.059)
Vocational	0.423***	0.526***
	(0.080)	(0.062)
Ethnic minority friends (ref. none)		
A few	−0.274***	−0.227***
	(0.068)	(0.051)
Half	−0.542***	−0.405***
	(0.090)	(0.081)
Most/all	−0.462***	−0.498***
	(0.110)	(0.091)
Laddish attitudes	0.237***	0.108**
	(0.035)	(0.034)
Variance components		
Intercept u0	0.396 (0.017)	0.326 (0.014)

Note: Results multilevel analyses.
°$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

The remaining results were similar for boys and girls: Higher levels of ethnic prejudice in schools with lower proportions of ethnic minority pupils, and among youth who are enrolled in a technical or vocational track versus an academic track, and if they indicate none of their friends are from an ethnic minority background. Boys and girls with stronger laddish attitudes display higher levels of ethnic prejudice (Table 5).

Discussion

Worldwide migration has resulted in increasing ethnic diverse societies. As a result, outgroup attitudes of the majority group against ethnic minorities received growing attention. Although ethnic prejudice has been well researched, only a few studies have focused on the determinants of ethnic prejudice, and these have usually restricted their attention to individual-level predictors (Coenders, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2004; Vervoort, Scholte, and Scheepers 2008). The current study is unique in exploring the association between school gender composition, laddish culture, levels of laddish attitudes and ethnic prejudice among Flemish pupils. First, we aimed to examine the association between gender composition and ethnic prejudice. Second, we wanted to explore the role of a laddish pupil culture and laddish attitudes, and their interaction with gender.

This study shows that in general a greater proportion of female pupils in a school is negatively associated with ethnic prejudice, but this association disappears when taking

into account the laddish culture of the school and pupils' laddish attitudes. In line with previous studies demonstrating that pupils' laddish attitudes are related to racist attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Connolly 1994; Willis 1977), we find for boys as well as girls, that higher levels of anti-academic, that is laddish attitudes, coincide with higher levels of ethnic prejudice, and boys manifest more laddish attitudes than do girls. However, only boys' ethnic prejudice is associated with their school's laddish culture: The more laddish the pupil culture is, the more ethnic prejudiced boys tend to be, irrespective of their own laddish attitudes. This finding is in line with previous findings that boys seem to attach more importance to their public image (Davies 1984; Francis 1999; Warrington, Younger, and Williams 2000), which makes them more susceptible to the prevailing culture (Van Houtte 2004), in this case the laddish school culture. As for girls, laddish school culture influences their ethnic prejudice only in schools with higher proportions of boys, which might indicate that the greater the presence of boys, the greater the pressure for girls to comply with the prevailing laddish culture – at least with respect to ethnic prejudice. It might be interesting for future research to investigate whether this also holds for other, more academic, attitudes. The fact that especially boys' anti-academic attitudes relate to ethnic prejudice and that boys are more prone to laddish culture, could lead one to see these components of laddism primarily as means of performing masculinity. However, it should be noted that girls are not immune from laddism either (see also Jackson 2006). Girls' anti-academic attitudes and ethnic prejudice also coincide, and under certain circumstances – namely in the presence of a greater proportion of boys – girls seem influenced by laddish culture, too. Future research should also try to take into account the coherence or strength of the culture. In present research a higher extent of laddishness coincides with less coherence, meaning that more laddish cultures are less strong. It might be expected that the impact of laddish culture depends upon the strength of it. It could be interesting too to identify extreme outliers within a school who presumably dominate peers.

Our findings not only highlight the need for more research including macro factors, individual variables, and their interdependence in explaining ethnic prejudice (Bar-Tal 1997; Stevens and Görgöz 2010), they also suggest to look beyond rather obvious features, like schools' ethnic composition. This study shows that, in order to increase the theoretical understanding of the development of ethnic prejudice, it is important to take into account less likely features such as gender composition or laddish culture. Findings also point to the need for investigating possible differential associations, for example along gender lines. Present findings not only suggest that boys and girls respond differently to school features like gender composition or laddish culture, but also that the context might determine to which extent boys and girls develop ethnic prejudices. So, on average boys might display higher levels of ethnic prejudice than do girls, but among boys differences can be found according to the context they are in.

Hence, this study also adds to gender research. Recently scholars have paid more attention to how gender differences might be nuanced by disaggregating gender gaps along race, social class, levels of assessment and so on – the issue of intersectionality (Gorard, Rees, and Salisbury 2001; Morris 2012). However, remarkably little research deals with the context in which boys and girls form their attitudes and behaviour, such as the school (Legewie and DiPrete 2012; Van Houtte 2017). More research is needed to

understand why boys' ethnic prejudice is influenced by the gender composition of the school independently from the laddish culture and their laddish attitudes while girls' is not.

This study has some limitations. First, it uses cross-sectional data, so causality cannot be determined in the relationship between gender composition, a laddish pupil culture and pupils' levels of ethnic prejudice. Flemish education involves family choice of secondary schools, thus introducing the possibility of a selection effect at the level of the school. Pupils who are more ethnic prejudiced may be more likely to select schools with a specific composition or culture. Longitudinal research that allows an examination of how ethnic prejudice evolves during the course of secondary education could shed a light on this. Furthermore, ethnic prejudice refers to a negative attitude towards Moroccans, Turks, and Eastern Europeans, but research shows that ethnic prejudice may vary depending on the specific nationality of ethnic minorities, and is related to the immigration history of the ethnic group (Chang and Demyan 2007; Kalin 1996). Studies show a discrepancy between overt and covert discrimination (Crosby, Bromley, and Saxe 1980) and implicit and explicit prejudice (Banaji and Greenwald 1994). Given that the scale we used to measure pupils' ethnic prejudice may be sensitive to socially desirable answers, a more implicit measure of ethnic prejudice could be more reliable (Glock and Krolak-Schwerdt 2014). Finally, this study only takes the attitudinal component of laddism into account. We look at anti-academic attitudes and ethnic prejudice but not other dimensions, such as laddish behaviour. Further research could explore other (behavioural) components of laddism such as defiance of educators, violence, or sexism.

Reducing ethnic prejudice is high on the current reform agenda of policy makers. Research about the influence of school contexts is pivotal in this light because educators and policy makers can manipulate school features more readily than they can alter pupils' characteristics (Marcoulides, Heck, and Papanastasiou 2005; Mickelson 2014; Mickelson, Bottia, and Lambert 2013). Certainly, the results of present study suggest that it might be fruitful to focus on macro-level factors, such as tackling laddish cultures at school in order to reduce ethnic prejudice, rather than on individual behaviours. In doing so, other adverse dimensions of laddish culture, such as anti-academic attitudes, are likely to be addressed at the same time. Laddish attitudes, behaviours and cultures cannot be understood independently from gaining social status, being popular and cool (cf. Jackson 2006; Willis 1977), and to undermine them, it is important to develop a good understanding of what laddish culture entails and, above all, what are its origins and in which contexts and climates laddish cultures flourish. By doing so, this study contributes to the broader project of understanding the contributions of school organizational features to variations in ethnic prejudice among adolescents.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Research Foundation Flanders (grant number FWO G062114N).

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